

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-14

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R 020704Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7400

COMUSSAG NKP THAI

CINCPAC HONOH

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 10167

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MIL VS

SUBJ: SITUATION IN BINH DINH

FOLG TEL SENT ACTION EMBASSY SAIGON INFO DAO SAIGON FM AMCONSUL
NHA TRANG 02 AUG 74 REPEATED FYI:

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NHA TRANG 0470

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MILI VS

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN BINH DINH

DAO FOR AOSOP-OR/IS/ISF

1. SINCE JULY 25 THE INTENSITY OF FIGHTING IN BINH PROVINCE
HAS MARKEDLY INCREASED AS THE VC/NVA INITIATED WHAT IS BELIEVED
TO BE A NEW PHASE OF THEIR SUMMER OFFENSIVE. ATTACKS AGAINST GVN
COMPANY SIZE POSITIONS BY COMMUNIST BATTALIONS REINFORCED BY
HEAVY WEAPONS HAVE NOT BEEN UNCOMMON AND SEVERAL COORDINATED
ASSAULTS ON GVN BATTALION COMPLEXES BY ELEMENTS OF THREE NVA
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REGIMENTS HAVE OCCURRED. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE PRECEDED THEIR

ASSAULTS WITH INTENSE BARRAGES OF MORTAR, ROCKET, AND ARTILLERY FIRE AND HAVE ATTEMPTED TO OVERWHELM FRIENDLY UNITS WITH NUMERICALLY SUPERIOR FORCES.

2. ENEMY EFFORTS APPEAR TO BE DIRECTED PRIMARILY AGAINST THE NHONG AND PHU CU PASSES, AT PHU MY DISTRICT, AND AT THE SHALLOW PORT TOWN OF DE GI. (IN GENERAL TOAN'S VIEW, THE ENEMY'S OBJECTIVE IS TO SECURE A CORRIDOR FROM THE AN LAO VALLEY TO DE GI.) THEY CURRENTLY OCCUPY THE NHONG PASS (BR 913710) IN STRENGTH AND CONTROL QL 1 AT THAT POINT. UNITS INVOLVED ARE FORWARD ELEMENTS OF THE NVA 3RD DIVISION HQS., THE 2ND REGT., THE 2ND BN OF THE 12TH REGT AND THE 16TH AND 40TH AA BNS. THE NVA 141ST REGT IS INVOLVED IN THE PHU CU PASS AREA (BR 894874) AND IS DEPLOYED NORTHWARD TO THE WEST OF TAM QUAN DISTRICT TOWN. THE PHU CU PASS ITSELF IS STILL CONTROLLED BY GVN FORCES. THE 53RD VC LOCAL FORCE BN IS LOCATED SE OF TAM QUAN DISTRICT TOWN. AT PHU MY, COMMUNIST UNITS INCLUDE THE VC 73RD, 50TH AND 55TH BNS WITH THE D-8 BN OCCUPYING THE HIGH GROUND 4 KMS WEST OF DE GI.

3. A NEW FACTOR IN THE AREA IS THE PRESENCE OF THE 16TH AND 40TH AA BNS WHICH REPORTEDLY ARRIVED 3 OR 4 DAYS AGO IN THE PASS AREAS. THEY ARE EQUIPPED WITH 37 MM AND 12.75 MM AA GUNS, AND ARE INHIBITING THE USE OF AIR POWER. ONE A-37 AIRCRAFT WAS HIT AT 11,000 FEET IN THIS AREA ON JULY 28 BUT MADE A SAFE LANDING AT PHU CAT AIR BASE.

4. OUR PROVINCE REPRESENTATIVE IN BINH DINH REPORTS THAT CIVILIANS HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS AND KIDNAPPINGS. OVER TWO HUNDRED YOUNG VIETNAMESE MALES AND FEMALES IN PHU CAT WERE ABDUCTED AND AN INTELLIGENCE REPORT INDICATED THE VC/NVA HAVE ISSUED ORDER TO "CAPTURE" ALL INDIVIDUALS IN PHU MY DISTRICT BETWEEN THE AGES OF 20 AND 40. AT 1930 HOURS, 31 JULY, QUI NHON CITY RECEIVED THREE 107 MM ROCKETS FROM THE NORTHEAST KILLING 3 CIVILIANS (TWO CHILDREN) AND WOUNDING 8 OTHERS. HAMLETS WITH NO PARTICULAR MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE HAVE ALSO BEEN SHELLED. AS OF THIS WRITING, AN ESTIMATED 76,000 DISPLACED WAR VICTIMS HAVE BEEN GENERATED BY THE FIGHTING.

5. IN RESPONSE TO THE INCREASED THREAT, THE 22ND ARVN DIVISION HQS
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WITH ITS 42ND REGIMENT, TWO SQUADRONS OF APC'S PLUS NORMAL SUPPORTING ELEMENTS WAS DEPLOYED TO BINH DINH ON JULY 30, REJOINING THE 47TH REGT WHICH HAS BEEN CONDUCTING OPERATIONS IN THE NORTHERN SECTOR OF THE PROVINCE. THE COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE 22ND DIVISION, BRIG. GEN. PHAM DINH NIEM, HAS ASSUMED DIRECT CONTROL OVER ULL GOVERNMENT FORCES OPERATING IN THE PHU MY AREA WHILE COL. THO, THE PROVINCE CHIEF, RETAINS CONTROL OF UNITS OPERATING IN THE REST OF THE PROVINCE, TO INCLUDE THE 47TH REGT.

6. WHILE THE TEMPO OF FIGHTING IN BINH DINH HAS SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED DURING THE PAST WEEK, THE NEW ARVN UNITS WHICH HAVE JUST ARRIVED SHOULD BE ADEQUATE TO CONTROL THE SITUATION. THE NVA 3RD DIVISION HAS HAD THE REPUTATION OF BEING WEAK FOR SOME TIME AND TOOK SERIOUS LOSSES DURING THE FIGHTING AROUND PHU CAT AIR BASE AT THE END OF MAY. THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF SOME REPLACEMENTS ARRIVING BUT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ENOUGH TO BRING THE DIVISION BACK TO MAY STRENGTH LEVELS. FRIENDLY FORCES, ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE NOW STRONGER. ALTHOUGH THE AA UNIN PRESENT A PROBLEM AND THE COMMUNIST UNITS OCCUPYING THE NHONG PASS APPEAR DETERMINED TO STAY THERE, THE BINH DINH PROVINCE CHIEF BELIEVES HE CAN RESTORE THE SITUATION TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE JULY 25 IN 7 TO 10 DAYS TIME UNLESS NEW ENEMY UNITS ARE INTRODUCED.

7. THE PROVINCE CHIEF, COL. THO, ASSOCIATES THE CURRENT INCREASED ENEMY ACTIVITY IN BINH DINH (AND ELSEWHERE) WITH RUMORS OF NEW TALKS IN PARIS REGARDING THE CEASE FIRE. HE BELIEVES THAT THE ENEMY'S CURRENT OBJECTIVE IS TO OBTAIN CONTROL OF THE NORTHERN PART OF BINH DINH AND A PORT SUCH AS DE GI, BEFORE NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN. THE TALKS WOULD THEN CONFIRM VC/NVA CONTROL OVER THESE AREAS AND WOULD EFFECTIVELY CUT VIETNAM IN HALF. COL. THO HAS SEEN THIS AS THE COMMUNIST'S OBJECTIVE FOR SOME TIME AND HE IS DETERMINED NOT TO LET IT HAPPEN. WITH THE NEW FORCES AT THIS AND BINH DINH'S DISPOSAL THERE IS NO REASON WHY THE OUTCOME OF THE BATTLE SHOULD NOT BE FAVORABLE TO THE GVN. FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, HOWEVER, THERE IS LIKELY TO BE CONTINUED HARD FIGHTING. SPEAR. UNQTE LEHMAN

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